



**“Sustainable Links-
Stronger Economy”**

15-16 May
Budva, Montenegro

JOINT DECLARATION “Taking forward the Green Lanes”

We, the Participants of the Connectivity Summit from the CEFTA, and South East European Parties of the Transport Community Treaty and observing participants, (hereafter “Participants”):

- Recognise the significance of sustainable trade and transport connectivity as a foundation of the economic and social integration of the EU and Western Balkans/CEFTA
- Consider the Conclusions from the EU-Western Balkans Summits held in Sofia in 2020 and in Tirana in 2022, which respectively promoted and renewed the support for the implementation of the joint Transport Community-CEFTA initiative for the establishment of the Green Lanes
- Consider the Presidency conclusions of the Ministerial meeting on Cross-Border Connectivity Between the EU and the Western Balkans held on July 6th 2021, in Brdo, Slovenia, as well as the Joint Communique of the Thessaloniki Connectivity Forum held on July 7th, 2022
- Aim at addressing the challenges faced at the EU- Western Balkans/CEFTA crossings concerning severe capacity restraints affecting the transport and trade flows and causing long queues and delays at peak times.
- Acknowledge the need to increase the efforts in facilitating transport and trade with an overarching aim to expedite trade, reduce waiting times, and improve the efficiency of the value chains.

Therefore, we duly endorse the following Summit's Conclusions,

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

1. Welcome the signing of High-Level Agreements between Transport Community Contracting parties, adjusting the indicative extension of the TEN-T Comprehensive and Core Network to the Western Balkans and the corresponding maps, based on the European Commission's consultation process on the TEN-T revision and inclusion of Western Balkans Partners.
2. Welcome the Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on extending the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) to neighbouring third countries, which sets out the establishment of the Western Balkans-Eastern Mediterranean Corridor.
3. Commit to continuously work on closing the investment and connectivity gaps between the Region and the EU, based on the revised TEN-T Network.
4. Commit to engage in close dialogue with partners for (re)establishment of major city rail connections in the Western Balkans and between Western Balkans and the EU, as well as green multimodal transport networks, providing for seamless, sustainable, and effective transport across the Union as well as the Western Balkans region while strengthening social and economic cohesion.

TRANSPORT AND TRADE FACILITATION

5. Welcome the positive response of the European Commission to the joint proposal by CEFTA and the Transport Community to deliver Customs cooperation agreements which will allow for full applicability of the exchange of information in the direction from EU to CEFTA, as well as close coordination in customs and other related matters on trade facilitation, including risk management, Authorised Economic Operators, and similar.

- 6.** Express the willingness to implement the EU-Western Balkans/CEFTA Green Lanes joint initiative fully and to work closely with the CEFTA Secretariat and the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community in enabling the system for the electronic exchange of data (SEED+) to be practically applied on the main border crossing points between the EU Member States and their neighbouring Western Balkans/CEFTA Parties, as well as to explore the possibilities to extend the system to Ukraine and Georgia. Take note that cooperation via the System for Electronic Exchange of Data (SEED) is contingent on adequate legal framework.
- 7.** Express an appreciation to the functioning of the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes serving as essential corridors not only for Ukraine's agricultural exports, but also for the export and import of other goods, and welcome the important role played in this respect by Ukraine's neighboring countries. Invite participants to draw best practices from the increasing capacity of transport network and transshipment terminals, as well as from improving customs operations and inspections, and try to reflect them, to extent possible, in the current transport and trade facilitation agenda.
- 8.** Duly consider the possible implementation of advanced models of integrated border management (IBM) with the EU and use of digital technologies based on sound analysis and current EU legal framework, including EU Customs and Schengen rules.
- 9.** Request the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community and CEFTA Secretariat, to develop a comprehensive Action Plan (roadmap), outlining next steps to further deliver on the EU- Western Balkans/CEFTA Green lanes.
- 10.** Invite all stakeholders to fully engage in the process of coordination of the Action Plan's (roadmap's) preparation.
- 11.** Explore the possibilities to pilot digital transport corridors according to the Regulation (EU) 2020/1056 on electronic freight transport information and implement results of TCT Technical assistance on the deployment of e-freight in the Western Balkans/CEFTA.
- 12.** Express need to continuously work on accelerating the clearance procedures, improve the risks analysis and reduce the costs of trade. In particular, enable EU-Western Balkans/CEFTA sharing data among all agencies involved in clearance of goods- food, veterinary and phytosanitary agencies.
- 13.** Explore the possibilities of recognition of programmes, procedures and trade facilitation measures to reduce controls and boost benefits for economic operators of trade. In particular, enable EU-CEFTA sharing of data among all agencies involved in clearance of goods - food, veterinary and phytosanitary agencies.